

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

VISIONS OF LANDSCAPE: EAST AND WEST
February 17 - March 21, 1982

On February 17, The Cleveland Museum of Art will open a special exhibition drawn entirely from its own collections. More than 100 paintings, drawings, and prints will be shown together for the first time in Visions of Landscape: East and West.

The exhibition is based on a series of questions about the land and human responses to it: 1) How does the artist see, understand, imagine, or record the landscape? 2) How does the culture condition the artist to find some things in the landscape and not to find, or even look for, others? 3) How does the viewer regard, stand apart from, or imaginatively enter and move through the picture? 4) How do the figures in the picture relate to the landscape, in their size, position, significance, and meaning?

Beginning with these ideas, Visions of Landscape: East and West invites Museum visitors to look at and think about images of landscape from different cultures. The exhibition is neither historical nor art historical; it is, rather, a speculative "essay" which gives equal attention to differences and similarities between works from different times and places.

The point in space from which the artist chooses to render the landscape is a basic factor in determining the image. In the Orient, the vantage point is often a suspended, aerial one, shifting and imaginary. It gives an unrestricted view, encouraging the spectator's eye and mind to wander at will through a fictive countryside. The handscroll painting popular in China and Japan emphasizes the process of imagined movement; as the viewer unrolls and rerolls the painting, scene after scene appears and disappears.

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Landscape painting in Europe and America generally takes a lower, closer viewpoint, which is an integral feature of the convention of perspective. The viewer appears to stand on the ground at a fixed point: the expanse of the scene is limited on each side, taking in what the viewer might see if he held his head still and moved only his eyes. In most European and American landscape paintings, the foreground therefore assumes great importance for the viewer; it continues the plane on which he stands and provides a strong sense of the scale of objects which grow smaller with the illusion of increasing distance. Unlike the handscrolls of China and Japan, which unfold a sequence of images in time, Western paintings capture a brief moment of experience and fix it before our eyes.

Single elements in nature--rocks, trees, mountains, clouds--fascinate artists everywhere. Jacob van Ruisdael's Landscape with a Dead Tree and Li Shih-hsing's Old Trees by a Cool Stream are works that focus on one such element. Ruisdael's tree, twisted and bowed, testifies to the overwhelming power of nature and suggests our weakness, like the tree's, in the face of cosmic forces. Li Shih-hsing's trees are knotted and twisted by time and the elements but survive in spite of them. The conflict in each of these implied dramas is similiar, but setting and resolution differ radically.

Subject matter, vantage point, philosophical attitudes and assumptions, are all offered for examination and reflection in Visions of Landscape. Each work is a superior example of its kind, and explicit in each is the artist's delight in the materials of his craft. That delight--in ink, oil, or watercolor, in brush, pen, or pastel--can make the medium itself an expressive element. "Style" becomes much more than a collection of subtle idiosyncratic habits and rather a process that reflects the way the artist perceives the world around him.

Debating the questions and choosing works of art that make up the exhibition were: Sherman E. Lee, director of the Museum and chief curator of Oriental art; William S. Talbot, associate curator of paintings and assistant director for

3-visions of landscape

administration, who served as the supervising curator; Michael C. Cunningham, adjunct associate curator of Japanese art and assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University; Walter S. Gibson, professor of art history at Case Western Reserve University; Hilliard Goldfarb, assistant curator of prints and drawings and assistant professor at Case Western Reserve University; and David C. Ditner, assistant for research, department of later Western art.

The exhibition is supported in part by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council.

Museum staff will offer four public lectures in conjunction with the Visions of Landscape exhibition:

Sunday, February 21, at 3:30 pm. William S. Talbot on "Landscapes: East and West"

Sunday, March 7, at 3:00 pm. Marjorie Williams, assistant curator in the department of art history and education, on "Visions of the East"

Wednesday, March 10, at 8:30 pm. David C. Ditner on "Scenery and Scenario"

Sunday, March 21, at 3:00 pm. Helen O. Borowitz, associate curator in the department of art history and education, on "Turner and the Poetry of Landscape"

Instructors from the Museum's art history and education department will give daily gallery talks in the exhibition from Wednesday, February 24, through Tuesday, March 2, at 1:30 pm, with the exception of Monday, March 1, when the Museum is closed. A slide-tape on the exhibition, written and recorded by David Ditner, will be shown in the Museum's audio-visual center during the run of the exhibition. The lectures, gallery talks, and slide-tape are free and open to all.

The exhibition closes March 21, 1982.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.